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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON WAR ON IRAQ

Summary

-- Jordanian papers published today, March 21, are dominated by reports on the war with Iraq. Wire service reports highlight the bombing of Baghdad and President Saddam Hussein's televised speech to the Iraqi people. All papers also highlight King Abdullah's meeting with the State Security Council, during which he expressed concern for the welfare of the Iraqi people and pledged Jordanian humanitarian support, stressing Jordan's support for Iraq's territorial unity. Another lead story highlights Jordan's official denial of earlier reports quoting Iraqi sources that the Iraqis thwarted an American military attack across the Jordanian-Iraqi border. Also, the Minister of Information declared the eastern part of the Kingdom a closed military area that requires an official permit to enter. Other lead stories include reports of the anti-war demonstrations that took place in various areas in Jordan.

Editorial Commentary

-- "The American aggression against Iraq and the end of the world order"

Daily columnist Fahd Fanek writes on the back page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (03/21): "The American missiles launched by U.S. President George Bush against Iraq do not suggest changing the Iraqi regime only, but also changing the world order, that has prevailed and guaranteed relative peace in the world for five decades.. The U.S. administration chose to leave the world order, to bash international law and international legitimacy, to take the world back to the law of survival of the fittest, simply by ignoring the United Nations and the Security Council, and to launch an aggressive attack against Iraq in contradiction of the simplest rules of international law.. As of now, world countries must realize that they no longer live under the umbrella of international law, but under the law of power and the rule of the jungle. Therefore, their national security is gone; Israel, for example, may attempt some blatantly stupid actions such as invading Palestinian territories, expelling the people, attacking Syria and Lebanon, and carrying out other actions of aggression, which we had believed that the world would not allow."

-- "The Arabs must be active in the post-Saddam era"

Former Jordanian Minister of Information Saleh Qallab writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (03/21): "This is exactly what was expected. The Iraqi crisis reached the finish line. The need to violently undo the knot that could have been undone peacefully has become the only option. The worst of the matter is that the defense policy that the Arabs have adopted put them where they are today: a major Arab country is facing an unknown fate and they are incapable of doing anything.. The Iraqi President may have or may have not realized that the Security Council's battles and the confrontation between the United States and its allies on one hand and France and its supporters on the other had nothing to do with Iraq or with international legitimacy. Rather they were the outcome of conflicting interests for the purpose of creating another world power that balances the United States. Saddam Hussein's mistake was that instead of taking his already targeted country away from these world conflicts, he placed Iraq right in the middle of the storm and turned it into a battlefield for the conflicting parties. The outcome is that the United States, which would not have the single superpower formula altered, turned its back to all and moved towards war. What happened has happened and matters are where they are now. The

question is what can the Arabs do? It is not permissible for the future of a brotherly Arab country, of such a size and such an importance, to be decided in the absence of the Arab viewpoint."

-- "A war crime"

Columnist Ibrahim Absi writes on the back page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/21): "Had the world been free, moral and concerned for people's rights to life, freedom, security, peace, justice and democracy, and were it not subject to American threats and bribes, it would have declared a decisive stand against the criminal war being perpetrated by the U.S. administration against Iraq and the Iraqi people, and it would have declared its rebellion against the American tyranny that surpassed all levels.. The new American crime represented by this crazy war being perpetrated by the U.S and British administration against the Iraqi people is the dirtiest and bloodiest and deserves the name 'the mother of all crimes'."

-- "Invading the world"

Columnist Yaqoub Jaber writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/21): "The invasion of Iraq by the United States is nothing but part of a wide-scale invasion to control the world. The plan to invade Iraq is not a direct outcome of the September 11 attacks, but rather an old plan put in place by the hawks of the current U.S. administration before they came to power.. The United States controls most of the oil routes and now seeks to control what left of these routes under the pretext of combating terrorism. Invading Iraqi is nothing but part of this hellish scheme, which must be resisted via a coalition including Europe, China, Russia and all countries keen to protect their independence and dignity."

GNEHM